

SOME PROBLEMS OF TEXTUAL STUDY

Students of old texts preserved in different copies sometimes come across an interesting feature which is the suppression of the less known by the well known in the use of words and the presentation of ideas. Two handy illustrations of this characteristic are offered by Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, IV.67-68. These two stanzas describe Raghu's *divijaya* with particular reference to the Hūṇa people in the northern region. They run as follows in the reading accepted by the popular commentator Mallinātha and his followers:

Vinit-ādhva-śramās tasya Sindhu-tīra-viceṣṭanaiḥ /
dudhāvur vājinaḥ skandhāṃl lagna-kuṅkuma-kesarān //
Tatra Hūṇ-āvarodhānāṃ bhartṛṣu vyakta-vikramam /
kapola-pāṭal-ādeśi babhūva Raghu-ceṣṭitam //

The first of the two verses says how Raghu's horses were trying to shake off from their shoulders the filaments of the *kuṅkuma* or saffron flowers that had stuck to their manes when they were taking rest on the banks of the river Sindhu (i.e. the Indus) in the Hūṇa land. The second stanza speaks of Raghu's valour which crushed the Hūṇa people so that his activity became responsible for the sorrow-stricken widows of the Hūṇas making their cheeks (*kapola*) red (*pāṭala*) by constant striking at them in grief.

It is interesting to note that Vallabha, who is earlier than Mallinātha, and a few other commentators have accepted different texts of the two verses. Thus, in the first stanza, they read *Varṅkṣu* or the Oxus in place of *Sindhu* or the Indus. The question that offers itself to us is then whether Kālidāsa locates the Hūṇa people on the Oxus or in the valley of the Indus. Scholars are now generally in agreement that it was some copyist who substituted, in the passage in question, the name of the *Varṅkṣu*, with which the people outside the north-western region of the Indian sub-continent were not so familiar, by the *Sindhu* which

was so very well known to the people of all parts of the country. It is therefore supposed that Kālidāsa locates the Hūṇas on the Oxus and not on the Indus.

This difference in the reading of the stanzas reminds us of an incident in my life. When quarter of a century ago I was an officer of the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India and was stationed at Ootacamund in Tamil Nadu, the late Professor Dr. Buddha Prakash once requested me to offer him my views regarding the correctness of the readings preferred respectively by Vallabha and Mallinātha in the first of the two stanzas quoted above. On receipt of my reply in favour of the reading *Varṅksu* offered by Vallabha, Buddha Prakash argued that it was wrong because *kuṅkuma* (saffron) is grown in Kashmir and not in Afghanistan so that the river mentioned in connection with saffron must be the Upper Indus and cannot be the Oxus. At first, I found a little difficulty in replying instantly to the question raised by Buddha Prakash because no book on the agricultural products of Afghanistan was readily available to me at Ootacamund. However, while searching for information on this question here and there, I found out within a day or so from the article on Afghanistan in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that a quantity of saffron is exported by Afghanistan and passed this information on to Buddha Prakash. Within another day or so again I also found out that the word *bāhlika* (also spelt *bālhiika*, and with *ī* for *i* and *v* for *b*) is a synonym of *kuṅkuma* (saffron) and that this fact undoubtedly associates the object with the Bāhlika country on the Oxus in Northern Afghanistan, just as the Bengali words *supāri* (arecanut), *cini* (refined sugar) and *misri* (sugarcandy) appear to have been derived from the names of Sopara, China and Misr (Egypt) respectively. This information was likewise passed on at once to Buddha Prakash. Sometime later the said scholar contributed a paper to the *Journal of Indian History*, published by the Kerala University, Trivandrum, in which the problem was discussed without reference to the correspondence he had with us on the subject.

In the second stanza quoted above from the *Raghuvamśa*, Vallabha and some other commentators read the expression *kapola-pāṭala* as *kapola-pāṭana*, i.e. scarification of the cheeks, and there is no doubt that this is the correct reading because it not only gets an unexpected support from Chinese evidence regarding a Turkish custom but is also supported spectacularly by a tenth-century inscription.

While Kālidāsa and some of the commentators speak of the scarification of the cheeks of the Hūṇa widows, a few commentaries mention their breasts also in this connection¹. The commentaries sometimes speak of the scarification made by finger nails. The same custom is attributed to the Turkish people by some Chinese authors who say that

1. IHQ, vol. 38 (June, 1957), pp. 139 ff.; D. C. SIRCAR, *Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 216 ff.

the widows go around their tents making doleful lamentations and prick their faces with a knife so that one sees blood flowing with the tears. Reference is made here to scarification of faces by means of knives and not by finger nails².

Verse 14 of the Paschimbhag plate³ of Śricandra (c. 925-75 A.D.) says how the Candra king satisfied the god of warfare by rubbing off the decorations on the breasts of the Yamana or Yavana women, by causing scarification of the cheeks and bellies of the berieved Hūṇa widows and by rooting out the Utkala ladies' love for toddy. Here belly is added to the list of limbs which were scarified by the womenfolk of the Hūṇa and Turkish peoples.

The above distortion of Kālidāsa's meaning in the hands of one of the most erudite medieval commentators on Sanskrit *kāvya* literature reminds us of the well-known saying *vastu-viplava-kṛtaḥ prāyeṇa ṭikā-kṛtaḥ*, an early and interesting instance of which is exhibited by the Singhalese commentator who wrote, in the fifth or sixth century A.D., the story of the *Daśaratha Jātaka* on the basis of the old *Jātaka gāthās* in the *Khuddakanikāya* Section of the *Suttapiṭaka* which is assignable to the second or third century B.C. According to the first of the *gāthās* of the *Jātaka* in question, when Bharata gave the news of Daśaratha's death to Rāma, the latter advised Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, who were respectively his brother and sister according to the *Jātaka* story, on their arrival, to get into the waters — *ubho otarath odakam*. The obvious meaning of this is that Rāma advised Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā to prepare for performing the *tarpaṇa* or water-ceremony for their deceased father. In a similar context, the *Rāmāyaṇa*⁴ also uses analogous language — *kriyatām udakarṇ pituḥ*. Because the fabricator of the story of the *Daśaratha Jātaka* was not an Indian but apparently a Singhalese monk, the real meaning of the *gāthā* was not clear to him so that he offered an absurd interpretation. In his views, Rāma thought that, if he disclosed the sad news to Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā all at once, they might die of grief, but that the sorrow might be somewhat bearable to them if they would hear the news when they would be in water. He therefore thought of a trick and said to Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā to get into the water of a neighbouring tank as a sort of punishment for returning late to their hut. When Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā were in the waters and heard from Rāma the news of Daśaratha's death, we are told, they thrice fainted there and then had to be dragged out to the bank of the tank. It will be seen

2. *Loc. cit.*

3. EI, vol. 37, pp. 289 ff.; D. C. SIRCAR, *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*, Calcutta, 1973, p. 66. The verse runs as follows:

*Santoṣaṁ raṇa-devatāṁ gamayatā vīry-āvadānair nṁjair
umṛṣṭaṁ Yama(va)ṇi-payodhara-taṭe patr-āṅguli-maṇḍanam /
śoka-pracchana-jarjjaraṁ viracitaṁ Hūṇi-kapol-odaraṁ
yen onmūlitaṁ Utkalī-nayanayos tāli-surā-ghūrṇitaṁ //*

4. II.103.17.

that the story is utterly foolish because, if Rāma was within his senses, he was not expected to create the said situation in which Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā had every possibility of being drowned by fainting in the waters⁵.

A more or less analogous instance is found in the inscriptions of the Pāla kings of Bengal and Bihar, although it is really a case of the use of a Sanskrit word modified by local use. There is a verse in the description of Dharmapāla (c. 775-812 A.D.) which is first noticed in the copper-plate grant⁶ of his grandson, king Śūrapāla I (c. 850-58 A.D.), and was adopted in the charter of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 860-917 A.D.) and afterwards copied in all the later grants of the family. The text of the stanza as found in the different records runs as follows:

*Lakṣmī-jaṇma-nīketanaṁ samakaro voḍhuṁ kṣamaḥ kṣmābharaṁ
pakṣa-ccheda-bhayād upasthitavatām ek-āśrayo bhūbhṛtām /
maryādā-paripālan-aika-nirataḥ śaury-ālayo 'smād abhūd
dugdh-āmbhodhi-vilāsa-hāsi-mahimā śrī-Dharmapālo nṛpaḥ //*⁷

The poet indirectly compares king Dharmapāla with the ocean, all his epithets except only one being suitable for the ocean also. The said epithet is — *dugdh-āmbhodhi-vilāsa-hāsi-mahimā*, i.e. his greatness laughed at the sports of the ocean. It is interesting that the word *hāsi* used in the above passage in the sense of laughter (i.e. derisive laughter) in all the records in question is not Sanskrit, the correct Sanskrit word being *hāsa*. There is also no doubt that the poet who originally composed the stanza must have written *vilāsa-hāsa* because that gives the pleasant repetition of the sound *āsa*, such repetitions being much liked in India throughout the ages. The word *hāsi* is popular in Bengali and several other Neo-Indo-Aryan dialects, and some copyist must have changed *hāsa* to *hāsi*, and he was followed by all the later authors of the copper-plate grants, who failed to notice that the word is not Sanskrit. We know that the word is *hāsi* in Kumāunī. *hāsi* or *hāṃsī* in Gujarātī and *hāṃhi* in Assamese, and it reminds us of Prakrit *hāsīa* and Neo-Sanskrit *hāsikā*⁸.

The above case of the influence of local usage on Classical Sanskrit vocabulary reminds us of other similar cases, particularly the medieval spelling of Sanskrit words under the influence of local pronunciation. An interesting instance of this is the epigraphic support for the East Indian modification of Sanskrit *ṣṇa* as *ṣṭa*. Thus the Parbatīya plates⁹

5. See JAIH, vol. 8, pp. 331-32. The Buddhist and Jain authors had a pleasure in distorting Brāhmaṇical legends. The Singhalese fabricators of the Jātaka stories are generally silent on Vālmiki's Rāma story apparently because it mentions the people of Sīnhala as Rākṣasa or ogres (*ibid.*, pp. 333 ff.).

6. JBRS, vol. 61, 1975, pp. 131 ff.

7. A. K. MAITREYA, *Gauḍalekhamālā* (in Bengali, B.S. 1319), pp. 57, 93, 123, 149.

8. See R. L. TURNER, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, London, 1966, p. 814.

9. EI, vol. 29, pp. 145 ff.

of king Vanamālavarmān of Assam, who flourished about the middle of the ninth century A.D., writes *Viṣṇu* and *Kṛṣṇa* as *Viṣṭu* and *Kṛṣṭa* respectively¹⁰. What is equally, if not more, interesting is that the same inscription writes the word *tuṣṭa* as *tuṣṇa*¹¹ which exhibits a rustic tendency resulting from the consciousness for improvement in a wrong way. It reminds us of the unlettered people of certain areas of Central Bengal mentioning *Lalit* (Sanskrit *Lalita*) as *Nalit*, but *Nagen* (Sanskrit *Nagendra*) as *Lagen*, and also *Saroj* as *Haroj* but *Harekrṣṇa* as *Sarekrṣṭa*¹².

The early medieval inscriptions of the Pālas and Senas and their contemporaries in Bengal and Bihar exhibit certain tendencies which can be traced as early as the sixth or even the close of the fifth century A.D. Thus *va* began to be pronounced as *ba* although, strangely enough, the fashion that developed was the writing of *ba* by the sign of *va*. However, the actual position is indicated by the spelling of words like *saṁvat* as *saṁvat* because it was certainly pronounced as *sambat*, which spelling actually occurs in some early epigraphs¹³. The local pronunciation of the *anusvāra* is likewise indicated in the said epigraphic records by the spelling of words like *vaṁśa* as *vaṁśa* and *saṁsāra* as *sansāra*, and also possibly by changing the final *m* to *anusvāra* at the end of the first and second halves of stanzas. The writing of *Vaṭeśvara* as *Vaṭeśvara*¹⁴ and *ṣaḍaṅga* as *ṣaḷaṅga*¹⁵ in a few pre-Pāla records probably suggests the gradual disappearance of the lingual *ḷa* and its substitution at a later date by the intervocal *ḍa*.

Just as Kalhaṇa's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* shows how proper names were often written in Kashmir in their Prakrit forms, e.g., *Sūrya* as *Suyya* and *Kalyāṇa* as *Kalhaṇa*, etc., the early medieval inscriptions of Assam exhibit local as well as Prakrit influence in a number of geographical names. As regards the first category, mention may be made of *Heṁsibā-bhūmi*¹⁶ while the second type is illustrated by the mention of the same village as *Santivaḍā*, *Santipātaka* and *Sāntivaḍa*¹⁷ though the Sanskrit form of the name would be *Sāntipātaka*.

10. See text lines 16 and 38.

11. Cf. text line 7.

12. Cf. *ṣaṭāt* for *haṭhāt*, *sākhās* for *sāhas*, etc. Similar is the change of *Rām* to *Ām*, but *ānāvāsyā* to *rāmāvāsyā*. The interchangeability of *l* and *n* has been discussed by S. K. CHATTERJĪ in his *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, vol. I, Calcutta reprint, Rupa, 1975, pp. 545-46, but not from this angle. Some words like *sākas* (*sākhās*) for *sāhas*, *lāc* for *nāc*, *lāṅ* for *nāṅ*, etc., have been recognised in *Bāṅglādeśer Āncalik Bhāṣār Abhidhān*, ed. M. Shahidullah, Dacca.

13. Cf. D. C. SIRCAR, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, vol. I, 1965, pp. 291, 295, 393; see also p. 126.

14. JBRS, vol. 37, parts 34, 1951, p. 6; text line 2, where the name was wrongly read as *Vaḍḍeśvara*.

15. *Select Inscriptions*, op. cit., p. 366, text line 19.

16. P. N. BHATTACHARYA, *Kāmarūpaśāsanāvalī* (in Bengali, Rangpur, B.S. 1338), p. 78, text lines 33-34.

17. A. K. MAITREYA, op. cit., pp. 134-35, text lines 49, 53 and 61-62.

There are many cases of badly edited texts in our country. Sometimes it has been our sad experience to note that the author of a work exhibits greater alertness in textual matters than the editor of his volume. In this connection, we are reminded of Vardhamāna's *Daṇḍaviveka* badly edited by Mahāmahopādhyāya Kamala Kṛṣṇa Smṛititīrtha in the Gaekward Oriental Series, vol. LIII, 1931. Vardhamāna quotes the following passage from Nārada —

Kākinī tu catur-bhāgo Māṣasya ca Paṇasya ca

and comments on it as follows —

*atha Ratnākare Vṛddhi-prakaranīyaḥ kvacit Palasy eti pāṭho lipi-pramādaḥ / Kāmadhenu-Kalpataru-Kṛtyasāra-Mitākṣarā-Smṛtisāreṣu Māna-prakarāṇe mūrdhanya-pāṭha-darśanāt Paṇa-Kārṣāpaṇ-ādi-prakarāṇe Suvarṇa-Māṣasya Palasya lakṣaṇa-yogāc ca /*¹⁸

Here Vardhamāna first says that, according to Nārada, Kākinī is one-fourth of both the Māṣa and the Paṇa. He then observes that *Pala* is the reading in place of *Paṇa* in the passage quoted above in the Section on Vṛddhi in the *Ratnākara*, but points out how the reading *Paṇa* is supported by the Section on Māna in the *Kāmadhenu*, *Kalpataru*, *Kṛtyasāra*, *Mitākṣarā* and *Smṛtisāra* as well as by what is gathered from the Section on Suvarṇa-Māṣa and *Pala* in the Section on *Paṇa*, *Kārṣāpaṇa*, etc.

This alertness may be compared with the inability of the Editor, Mahāmahopādhyāya Kamala Kṛṣṇa Smṛititīrtha, to detect even the most palpable copyist's error in the following passage —

Abhidhāna-koṣe tu —

Niṣkam aśtrī s-aṣṭa-hema-śate Dīnāra-Karṣayoḥ / rakṣo-'laṅkarāṇe hema-pale pi c ety uktam /

This will at once remind any serious student of Sanskrit literature of the *Amarakoṣa* passage —

S-aṣṭe śate Suvarṇānām hemny uro-bhūṣaṇe Pale //
*Dīnāre 'pi ca Niṣko 'strī... /*¹⁹

It is quite clear that what is quoted as *rakṣo-'laṅkarāṇa* is given as *uro-bhūṣaṇa* in the *Amarakoṣa*, and *uro-bhūṣaṇa* means «an ornament adorning the chest». This shows beyond doubt that, in the *Daṇḍaviveka*, the above synonym of *niṣka* is not *rakṣo-'laṅkarāṇa* which is meaningless, but *vakṣo-'laṅkarāṇa* which means the same thing, i.e. a necklace. There are several other such cases of editorial inefficiency.

Even more worthless editorial work is exhibited by texts like Munindra Mohan Chaudhuri's edition of Mathureśa's *Sabdaratnāvalī*,

18. *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-8.

19. See *Nānārtha-varga*, *Sāmānya-kāṇḍa*, verses 13-14.

published in 1970 in the famous Bibliotheca Indica Series by the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. The instances of editorial inefficiency is innumerable in the publication. It is really strange that the Editor failed to suggest the filling up of the lacuna in the following verse —

*Nāg-āṅko Hāstinapuram̐ Hāstinam̐ Hastināpuram /
Gajāhvayam̐ Gajāhvam̐ ca Gaja...m eva ca //*²⁰

when the restored reading of the last foot should quite clearly be *Gajasāhvayam eva ca*. This is because *Gajāhva* and *Gajāhvaya* mean « [the city] bearing the name Gaja » which is also the meaning of *Gajasāhvaya*. Strangely enough, the *Śabdakalpādruma* recognises *Gajasāhvaya* as a synonym of *Hastināpura* on the authority of the *Śabdaratnāvalī*. This shows that Chaudhuri's edition of the same work is based on poor manuscript material.

We may refer in this connection to another interesting aspect of textual study. A remarkable case of improvement in a badly deciphered text was offered by a grant of king Vanamālavarmān of Assam, to whom reference has been made above. The introductory stanzas are common in the two records of the king so far discovered, viz. the Tezpur and Parbatiya plates. A tentative transcript of the Tezpur plates had been published in 1840 when our epigraphical studies were at a rudimentary stage²¹; but no improvement upon the text could be made afterwards because the inscription was lost. However, the large number of serious errors in the reading of the text became known to the world of scholars only with the publication of the Parbatiya plates²² in 1951 after a period of more than a century. Some of the errors now removed are that Vanamāla's great-grandfather was Arathi the name of whose elder brother was Prāmbha although the name was formerly read wrongly as Sāmbha, that there was no king named Āratha regarded as the son of Arathi and the grandfather of Vanamāla, that Vanamāla's mother's name was Maṅgalā and not Śrīmattarā, that the name of the same king's grandmother was Jivadevī not Jivadā, and that the name of the capital city of the kings of the dynasty in question was Haḍapeśvara (also spelt *Haḍappeśvara*, *Haṭapeśvara* and *Haṭappeśvara*) and not *Hārūppeśvara*²³. The rectification of the errors in the published transcript of the Tezpur plates on the discovery of the Parbatiya plates in similar to the corrections effected in the text of a work prepared on the basis of manuscripts full of errors with the help of one or a few newly discovered manuscripts offering satisfactory readings.

20. See the geographical names in the latter part of the *Bhūmivarga*.

21. JASB, vol. 9 (1840), pp. 766-82.

22. EI, vol. 29, pp. 145 ff.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

The reading of the name Haḍappeśvara is supported by the recently discovered Saratbari plates²⁴ of Ratnapāla and the Gachtal plates²⁵ of Gopāla, which apply the name Haḍappakā to the same city. The real name seems to have been Haḍappā, usually called Haḍappeśvara owing to the existence of a temple enshrining the god Īśvara (Śiva, i.e. a Śiva-liṅga) who was worshipped by the kings of the Śālastambha line²⁶. The kings were also devoted to the god Kāmeśvara (i.e. Īśvara enshrined on Mt. Kāmakūṭa or the Kāma or Kāmākhyā hill) as well as his spouse Mahāgaurī (i.e. Kāmeśvarī also called Kāmā or Kāmākhyā)²⁷. The formation of the names Haḍappeśvara and Kāmeśvara is similar.

24. JAIH, vol. 10, p. 119.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

26. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 119.

27. P. N. BHATTACHARYA, *op. cit.*, p. 63; also see p. 138; EI, 29, pp. 145 ff., text line 39.